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BOOK REVIEWS

THE RELIGION OF THE HEBREWS. JOHN PUNNETT PETERS, Rector of St. Michael's Church, New York. Ginn & Co. 1914. \$2.75.

THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL. HENRY PRESERVED SMITH, Union Theological Seminary. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1914. \$2.50.

All history has to be rewritten from time to time; in the case of the Old Testament religion there is not only a constant accumulation of external material (pre-Israelite and other) and fresh exegetical results, but also new general views of history, broader conceptions of historical growth and historical unity, that is, of national life. The two volumes mentioned above pay due regard to all these considerations. They accept all the main conclusions of modern biblical criticism, and, though written independently of each other, are in substantial agreement as to the lines and the results of the religious development of Israel. The fact that the authors, members of two great orthodox Christian bodies, base their work on the conclusions of recent criticism, without question and without embarrassment, may help to remove or diminish the opposition to modern biblical criticism which still exists in some parts of this country.

The present Old Testament text, as our authors point out, contains material of various degrees of historical authority. There are contemporaneous documents (in histories, law-books, and the writings of prophets, psalmists, and sages); and there are parts that have been revised or rewritten by later scribes, the natural tendency being to import later ideas, ritual and Messianic, into earlier writings. Between original matter and additions the critic must discriminate by means of all the aids at his disposal, and he must not fail to recognize natural native development, when there is evidence for it, even when some outside influence is discernible or when some quite new conception seems to make its appearance. But, notwithstanding the varied character of Old Testament material, the text itself furnishes in the main the means of tracing an orderly growth of the old Hebrew thought. This is true particularly of the period after the time of David. The ground is less sure for the pre-Davidic period, and particularly for the beginnings. Both Peters and Smith recognize the meagreness of the records of the

most ancient time, as to the rôle, for example, to be assigned to Moses in the development. This, to be sure, is not a matter of fundamental importance—we are more concerned with the ethical and religious outcome of Hebrew life than with its starting-point. And it is doubtful whether the data at our command are sufficient to fix definitely the character and achievements of Moses. In regard to this there are two lines of tradition: one, the Judæan, says nothing about Moses as originator or introducer of the worship of Yahweh, speaking of it as practised by the patriarchs and as having begun in the time of a grandson of Adam; the other, the Northern or Israelite, represents Moses as having received the name Yahweh as a new name of Israel's god directly from the mouth of God. Recognizing this discrepancy in the two traditions, our authors agree, however, in regarding Moses as the real founder of the religion of Israel, and in some way connected with an initial ethical religious impulse. At the same time they hold that the Israelites, dwelling in the midst of the Midianites, absorbed or in some way adopted from them the cult of Yahweh. As to an ethical impulse at the beginning, there is no trace of ethical feeling in the Hebrew religion for more than two hundred years after the date usually assigned to Moses. On the other hand, the tradition from the ninth century and onwards persistently represents Moses as the founder of the national religion. The data have been treated in two ways: some scholars, relying on this later tradition, or insisting on the necessity for an individual founder (whose function was similar to that of Zoroaster or Jesus or Mohammed), regard Moses as a dominant religious personality; others, holding that he was a leader of some sort, yet find the general social conditions sufficient to account for the facts as we have them. It is the former of these views that is favored in the volumes under consideration, tentatively by Smith, decidedly by Peters.

The succeeding religious development is set forth in both volumes with fulness and clearness. The relation between popular opinion and the ideas of the religious leaders is kept constantly in mind—for example, the persistent polytheism of the masses down to a very late period, and the movement of prophets and sages through monolatry to a practical monotheism, which, however, permitted the recognition of the existence of other gods than Yahweh, but in actual life was not affected by this survival of the old beliefs. The effect of the growing sense of individual moral responsibility (a universal concomitant of moral growth) on the national religious life is clearly traced, and with it the development of the sense of sin which so

curiously combined spirituality with ancient physical conceptions. Israel's remarkable capacity of adaptation is pointed out. Whatever the social changes it experienced (sometimes apparently fatal), the nation was able not only to interpret them in accordance with the conviction of Yahweh's favor, but also to make them the occasion of a loftier view of the national mission in the world. The most striking illustration of this capacity is the treatment of the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah, regarded by both our authors as setting forth the future of the pious kernel of the nation, the true Israel, destined to be the teacher and savior of Israel and all other nations. The Messianic hope also (which illustrates the invincible reliance on Yahweh's saving guidance) is traced from its earliest appearance to the expectation of an individual saviour, generally a prince of the house of David, and finally, in the book of Enoch, to a supernatural pre-existent Man (the "Son of Man"), who is to crush all enemies and restore the ancient glories of the nation. It is properly pointed out that this hope was not destroyed by the growth of legalism; the devotion to the Law, nourished by the Synagogue, was, it is held, a quite natural and in many respects useful or necessary movement, accompanied by a keener sense of sin (which, however, was not wholly free from earlier low conceptions).

In both volumes the ethical growth of the nation is traced from the crude ideas and barbarous customs of the earliest times to the higher standards of the prophets, the legal literature, and the Wisdom books. The defect in the better moral thought, it is pointed out, is due to the self-complacent belief that Yahweh chose Israel out of all the nations and invested it with peculiar dignity and superiority to all the world, a belief from which followed a certain disregard of alien ideas and religious achievements. One would never learn from the Old Testament that Egypt, Persia, and Greece had produced anything in the sphere of religion that was valuable for the world. Yet, as is here pointed out, Israel did borrow or was influenced by outside ideas which it wove silently and skilfully into its own religious life. In the discussion of this department of religious thought, as in others, the moulding power of native external conditions and of psychical movements is recognized.

There is a noteworthy agreement in the two volumes in regard to critical questions such as the constitution and dates of various books—for example, Isaiah, Chronicles, and the Psalter. As is natural, there are different opinions among recent scholars as to the meaning of certain texts. The "Immanuel" of Isa. 7 14 is regarded by some as a designation of any child that should be born in the

immediate future, the "young woman" (not "virgin") being any Israelite mother, and the name signifying the presence and help of God; others regard the verse as belonging to the popular eschatology, a prediction of the coming deliverer; a third view, similar to the preceding, is that the young woman represents the nation, out of which shall arise the Saviour. Professor Smith prefers the first of these views, and Dr. Peters the third; yet the general conception of the development of Messianic thought is not affected by such exegetical differences. So there has been and is much discussion of Isa. 9 5 [6]; the passage is regarded by Smith as belonging to a later period, by Peters as Isaian. A whole literature has sprung up around the verse, into the discussion of which it is unnecessary to enter here, especially as the general sketch of Messianic thought is independent of the chronological and cultural considerations therein involved.

In both volumes the old-Hebrew idea of the future life is treated with caution and discrimination; in passages whose meaning is disputed the arguments on one side or the other are stated or indicated in such way that the reader can form his own opinion. This cautiousness regarding conclusions, a valuable quality, appears throughout the two histories. It is no easy thing to describe an ancient religion, particularly when the data are often meagre. But it may be said that, so far as the data go, Dr. Peters and Professor Smith have here given pictures of the religious life of ancient Israel that comply with all the demands of current historical science.

The proof-reading in these two volumes is admirable. Only one clerical error has been observed by the present reviewer: in Peters, p. 406, l. 8, instead of "second century of the Christian era," read "second century before the Christian era," or simply "second and first centuries B.C."

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REDEN UND AUFSÄTZE. HERMANN GUNKEL. Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht. Göttingen. 1913. Pp. viii, 192. 4.80m., bound 5.60m.

Gunkel is known to many in this country by his *Legends of Genesis*, the English translation of the remarkable introduction to his epoch-making commentary on Genesis. In the present little book he has collected and edited eleven essays in order to give to a wider circle of readers some illustrations of the *religionsgeschichtliche* and of the *literaturgeschichtliche* study of the Old Testament, of which he is a leading exponent.